

The Wanderers complete league double over Cup champions

Wycombe Wanderers 2, Leytonstone 1

NOT BEFORE TIME, Wycombe roused just enough of their missing aggression in the second half at Loakes Park to claim the distinction of an Isthmian League "double" over the European Amateur Cup champions.

Yet Leytonstone's ever-searching left winger, Brian Harvey, heard two-third's of a hat-trick cancelled by referee Bayston's offside whistle; for Wanderers, it was as close and as unsatisfactory as that.

Indeed, one goal in arrears at the interval, they tottered precariously near the brink of defeat before their saviour, Tony Horseman, winded the visitors with a swift equaliser following the resumption of what rarely rose above a disappointing anti-classic.

In common with his blond-haired counterpart, Roberts, Vince Faulkner held back essentially ineffective in the background of events. And without Horseman's regular interruption of Leytonstone's defensive routine, keeper Billy Hadlow would have been near redundant for the opening period.

For his pains however, the Wycombe number 10 suffered rough "shadow" treatment,

gaining a free kick as early as the 10th minute.

International Ken Gray, set up Leytonstone's goal. Having scuttled a "chance" high only seconds before, he evaded Maskell to push the ball inside for Harvey to re-direct over Wycombe's line in the 17th minute.

With support — only Les Merrick emerged as a second line of attack — Horseman in such mischievous mood could have been a more potent threat. But one man against the esteemed backline of Leytonstone had little chance, and careless Wanderers, trying to walk their attacks through rather than shoot, were, fortunate to still be in the reckoning after Harvey had lined up a scintillating 33rd minute second, spoilt by the linesman's flag.

Four minutes later, a Wycombe counter move ended drastically when Len Worley went down in the "box". Yet, if the referee's penalty decision was perhaps slightly surprising, then the way in which Horseman escalated his spot kick against a corner joint of the woodwork totally contradicted his apparent instinct for a killing on Saturday.

Injury time

Seconds into injury time, Horseman might have redeemed himself after Merrick had been upended by the burly, Les Tilley just outside the area. The free kick however slammed wastefully into the visitors' barrier.

His sins soon forgotten, Horseman revved up in the second half to curl the ball painfully near to the crossbar with Hadlow challenging in the 48th minute; and then two minutes later, slid in the leveller after Wycombe had worked a flanking movement off the right.

The vibrations shook Wanderers into their most positive 45 minutes for too many weeks, and Leytonstone into a state of unpredictable confusion.

Once more Horseman hit the spotlight heading a Merrick-made opportunity inches wide after 52 minutes. And the sudden mood noticeably spurred young Dave Thomas who linked energetically as his colleagues came out of their shells.

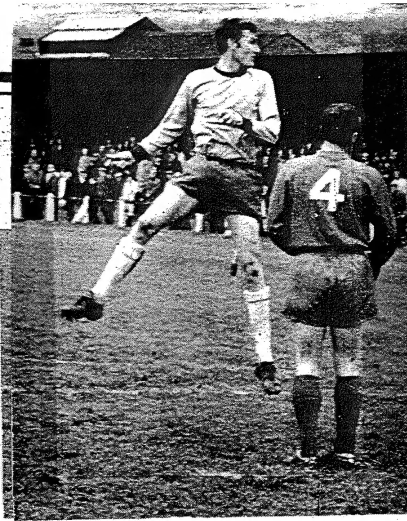
No retreat

Not that the Stone's ever fully retreated into theirs. For full back Les Tilley forced a desperate clearance from the efficient Julian Lailey within moments and Ken Gray slipped a shot wide of the net.

Sandwiched in between this retaliation, Hadlow barged down a Merrick attempt with Barry Baker following up with a powder puff that was deservedly stifled.

The Stone's had shown their hosts that old custom — long mourned by Loakes Park supporters — of thoughtfully searching out the open space and utilising it effectively with snap action. Now, refresher course digested, Wycombe reacted.

As matters grew hectic, Baker rocked the visitors' bar from 20 yards in the 60th minute and Hadlow robbed Thomas of a



Wycombe put the Leytonstone goal under pressure at Loakes Park on Saturday.

By Mike Whitesman

follow through after a probing Horseman volley had returned the danger.

Ironically it was Faulkner, still to prove himself capable of menacing a strong Isthmian defence, who put home the winner. Eighteen minutes from time he skated the ball in from 10 yards with a defender anxiously following his line of attack.

As Leytonstone strived to regain a point, Maskell advanced to smother a Stokes effort, but with Worley kicking on the turn going only inches wide after Thomas had lofted a feeder into the 'mouth, it was clear that the visitors were sinking slowly but surely.

They were at their most lethal when either Stokes or Harvey

held possession, although Maskell did well to stop Gray with an above head save.

Then came the drama as Harvey drove past the 'keeper. The crowd shouted for offside; the linesman flagged. But it took several seconds of consultations before Mr. Bayston finally ruled "no goal".

With six minutes still to play out, Maskell was called up again to fall at Gray's feet before the inside right could manage a shot.

A long overdue revival? A hint of better things to come? Or could it be that Wanderers are still a long way from being out of the woods? Certainly their second half performance was brighter and therefore more forceful than immediately preceding displays. But they undoubtedly need to tighten up throughout their game, paying particular attention to strengthening their attack.

MATCH DETAILS

Wycombe Wanderers: Maskell; Temel, Gale; Lailey, Rundle, Thomas; Worley, Baker, Faulkner, Horseman, Merrick.

Leytonstone: Hadlow; Tilley, Jennings, Andrews, Thomson, Goddard; Walker, Gray, Roberts, Stokes, Harvey.

Referee: Mr. M. J. Bayston (Hitchin).

Half-time: 0-1.

Goals time-table: Wycombe—Horseman (50), Faulkner (72). Leytonstone—Harvey (17).